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people to a better appreciation of the fine work of their own time. Fine carving is collected from the ends of the earth, but no one has tried to improve the humble bread-board which we use on our tables day by day. Put one of these side by side with old carvings in the museum.

At the present moment there is bound to be a large number of memorials and memorial tablets erected. Cannot the museum help to put the public in the right way to produce things that will be not only dignified expressions of grief, but beautiful objects to be sent on to posterity? A little exhibition could be arranged of local stones showing how they can be suitably used instead of the foreign marble which is always out of place in this climate; also of models, casts, or illustrations of simple tablets, old and new, calling attention to the best examples of old work in the churches of the neighborhood.

Comparison is very valuable for driving home a lesson. We might, for example, compare pieces of eighteenth century metal work for furniture with the nineteenth century copies and those of the present day. Do not be afraid to point out what is right and what is wrong. Many methods might be adopted for collecting groups of work for such industrial art museums. Each town might make its special trade the object of a collection, or museums might collaborate and exchange collections, or by the aid of some central committee repre-

sentative loan-collections might be made which would be available for all, and would illustrate the minor arts as they should be today.

The Design and Industries Association hopes shortly to make collections of printing and other articles, both English and foreign. These it will be glad to lend, in order to cooperate with museum curators, and to receive your support in making such collections really educational to the modern manufacturer, the workman and the public.

You will enlist a wider interest in your work, as many people will be glad to help if they see you take a lively interest in the problems which immediately concern them. If you arrange such collections as have been suggested, show simple every-day objects, finely and beautifully made, with which we can make our houses and lives pleasant.

This may be work only representing a small sphere of your museum activities, but we are all anxious to get back good work and good design into our every-day life and through our industries. It is, moreover, a vital necessity if we are to hold our own in the world's markets, and a nation that lives on reproducing the old, however good it may be, does not stand for progress, and must be decadent. The museum directors met with at the Werkbund meetings were all keenly alive to their use in this campaign for quality work, and it can hardly be that their English confrères will wish to be behindhand.

## CHARDIN

BY DUNCAN PHILLIPS

IT is the paradox of Chardin which puzzles us in attempting to estimate the importance of his achievement. All those who understand the qualities of supremely good painting invariably become noticeably exhilarated over the mere surface of a little masterpiece by this most subtle of "Little Masters." Of course, as also with Vermeer—it really isn't little work at all. It is big, bold painting by a knowing brush which left enduring beauties where it passed. And there is big human feeling in it, too, expended (more's the pity if you will) upon a kitchen kettle or the corner of a sideboard.

And the color! Fresher, finer color the world has never known. In the Louvre—Salle La Caze—the Chardins fascinate. From the sensual, sentimental, fashionable attractions of Greuze, Boucher, Nattier and the rest, one must return again and again to the mellow warmth of Chardin's peaches and the lustrous coldness of his grapes to the depths of ruby wine in his old dusty bottle, and to the tender blue of his house-keeper's apron, to the rich brown of his kitchen tiles and the fiery gleam of his copper cauldron, more than anything else to the wonderful way the colors play to-



THE HOUSEKEEPER

CHARDIN

gether, catching each other's influence, all in the harmony of daylight so diffused as to mingle the various subtleties of tone. And yet—there is good reason to check our enthusiasm and consider the man's limitations before we have exalted him to the highest rank. There remains a disturbing paradox about Chardin. Very curiously his choice of subjects reveals him as both the most humble and timid and as the most proud and independent of painters.

The French people have a word for the domestic routine which Chardin so persistently represented. When they speak of an "*interieur*" they refer, not merely to the inside of a house but to the intimacy of a household. All his life Chardin was content to paint the *interieur* of the *bourgeoisie*, the daily round of small concerns which make up the uneventful existence of the

middle class housekeeper. The home was so delightfully this artist's delight, that he was spontaneously affectionate and personal in rendering the appearance of the mere walls and furniture. His empty rooms, whether they are neat or in disorder, are immediately suggestive of the persons who have just gone out and will soon return. Particularly we suspect Chardin of a sly passion for the pantry. To appreciate this amiable weakness one needs only to recall adventurous explorations of one's own childhood into the risky region of appetizing odors. I cannot be convinced that Chardin only cared for Still Life because of its paintable surfaces and textures. For all his sure sense of the beauty of truth, citizen Chardin was no aesthete—"the world well lost" for the sake of arbitrary "arrangements." Had

he been a seeker after effects of abstract beauty he would no doubt have followed Watteau's example and willingly furnished the world of fashion with flattering fantasies upon its palace gardens and gowns of rare brocade. Instead we suppose that he associated imagination in art with the prevailing snobbery and artificiality of court life, against the standards of which, in his own unassuming way, he rebelled. Call him what you wished—he preferred to stay at home. Quite frankly there was all the beauty he needed—right there. *Voilà tout!* He liked to paint what he pleased, and as he pleased, taking as long to do it as ever he chose. He liked to watch the small children on his street, so quaintly well behaved and yet so much absorbed in their own devices for killing time. He liked to amuse the good woman, his neighbor, by occasional raids upon her larder. What *Nature morte* could he carry off this morning? A basket of peaches? No? He could have a few eggs and a slice of fried ham from last night's supper. *Bon!* that would do for his picture.

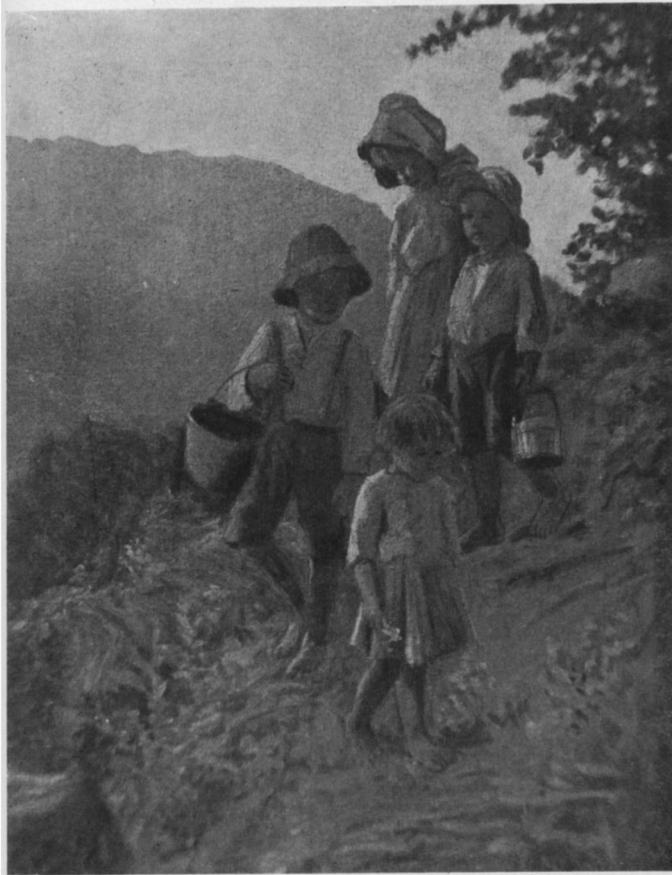
So easily satisfied for a subject! Surely it argues a lack of courage no less than a lack of imagination in the good man. But does it? Consider the aesthetic traditions and standards of the age and the city in which he lived, and had to make a living. Did he supply a demand? Not he. He knew himself and he knew that lots of other people were like him. He depended upon eventually creating a demand for the sort of thing he could do. The patricians were enslaving the artists, compelling them to refine upon their refinements, to celebrate their celebrity, to idealize their amours. Because one had to make a living, the artists made the best of their lot by painting just as well as the bad taste of their patrons permitted. After all there was so much that was picturesque and even personal about the Ovidian allegories and the Romanesque fantasies which were the fashion in pictures that their servitude was not as galling as it might have been. But Chardin apparently disliked caprice and realized his lack of imagination. He was not the kind of man who rebels conspicuously against authority or invents anything new and startling. He was not a rebel. He was a philosopher. He knew what he

could do and what he couldn't—or wouldn't, it was the same thing. His young wife died four years after their marriage and left him alone with their child of three. His own wants—so simple, and his family—so small—was there any need to make money at the expense of one's sincerity? For him there was no use painting unless things were made to look natural. He would paint for his own class of people, scenes familiar to his life and theirs. Engravings could be made from them and sold cheap to everybody. People would be less dissatisfied if they could see beauty as he saw it, all around them, as the Dutch people had learned to see it from their painters. For always there was the Dutch tradition back of Chardin. In our admiration for his courage and independence we must remember that if it had not been for the precedent established by the genius of Vermeer and Maes and Pieter De Hooghe, he might never have undertaken to paint at all.

And yet what really splendid courage it did require to be a Chardin, in spite of all that was going on in Paris!—to be an artist and yet to renounce the dramatic world that survived Louis Quatorze, the gorgeous pageantry, the historic backgrounds, the mythical disguises, the portentous significance of poverty being neglected to spare the pride of pomp: to renounce all this for the look of little shadowy rooms where the light came in so softly, where everything happened from day to day just as everything had happened long before these children of the painter's brush were born, one day exactly like its neighbors, familiar ways settling soon into habits. And so—quite unintentionally—the courage of the man's point of view changes our conception of his homely prose. It seems somehow poetic. The fruit heaped up for dessert in that bowl of flowered china becomes a symbol of the meals at home, and the young housekeeper just back from market with a leg of mutton and a crisp brown loaf, she too becomes a symbol of the wholesome beauty that was his portion any day. And then there was the little boy blowing his soap bubbles, building his card castles, pouting because the governess reproved him for no longer playing with his toys. The good Père

Chardin was never bored, like the little boy in the picture at Vienna. He had a pair of wise and wonderful eyes with which he could see, in the loveliness of daylight and its diffusion, a certain delicacy and refinement even in the look of common things. Lacking in imagination and in invention he was richly endowed with a genius for painting and with something

very much like a genius for philosophy. As Brownell has written, "There can rarely have been such an instance as he affords of an artist selecting from his environment only those things which his own genius needed, and rejecting all that would have hampered or distracted him." Painters shall always have much to learn from Chardin.



BERRIES FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

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